The Japan News by The Yomiuri Shimbun

Opinion & Analysis

Era of global antiglobalization at hand

By Masayuki Yamauchi

In Europe, countries including France, which is scheduled to hold a presidential election in 2017, continue to be alarmed at Republican Donald Trump's victory in the recent U.S. presidential election because his election means the emergence of far-right political forces throughout Europe and the surge of far-right, national-populist movements.

Those who are taken aback by the new U.S. political trend are giving up hope for the emergence of far-right movements in Europe.

Aecia first threats

Meanwhile, based on his populist "America first" doctrine, President-elect Trump threatens to let the United States evade its post-Cold War responsibility for facilitating the expansion of free trade in the world and globalization. For example, he has already said the United States will quit the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement on his first day in the White House.

Trump's victory may portend the spread of a continent-wide wave of antiglobalization, which is an extension of the populist syndrome that came to the fore in June's Brexit referendum.

I expect the U.S. policy toward the Middle East will have a significant effect on the world, and it will become the symbolic embodiment of Trump's "America first" policy.

A decision to reduce both military and private spending in the Middle East will certainly be applauded by the populist supporters, who want to see an increase in jobs at home. Furthermore, and paradoxical as it may sound, when the militant group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) captured parts of Syria and Iraq, the U.S. government had spent a total of $9 billion — $12 billion per day — on the fight against ISIL.

Trump and Barack Obama, who will succeed him on Jan. 20 as U.S. head of state, have one thing in common. Both are indifferent to the future fate of the Middle Eastern inhabitants, including refugees and Palestinians. Trump, in particular, has shown an inclination to recognize recognize even autocratic authoritarian regimes as sovereign leaders as long as they provide security and stability for the United States and the world.

In his election campaign, Trump promised to reduce spending on the Middle East and to allow military forces in the region to "return home." This agenda is likely to put the Middle East to the back burner.

In mid-August, troops of the Randstad Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) staged military exercises in the Pacific Ocean, involving Russia, China and Latvias to keep the EU and NATO in check. CSTO comprises the same countries that form the European Economic Community (EEU) left behind by the United States.

President Putin proposed that a Greater Eurasian Partnership be launched on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) platform, a bloc which includes China and Russia — and the EEU with the participation of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

I do not think Trump's new strategy marks the end of the U.S. policy toward the Middle East, as some analysts may think. Instead, it is likely to represent a grand strategy that could become a foundation for the new global order, especially given the potential for increased U.S.-China rivalry.

The U.S. policy toward the Middle East will become the symbolic embodiment of America first' policy.

The world political landscape is characterized by rapid change, and it is difficult to predict the outcomes of events. These are the challenges we face.

U.S. policy toward the Middle East will become the symbolic embodiment of "America first" policy.

Yamauchi is a professor at Meiji University and a professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo, where he used to head the University of Tokyo Center for Middle Eastern, Islamic and South Asian Studies. Concurrently, he serves as a member on the government panel of experts tasked with discussing the many challenges facing the world. In that capacity, he is expected to have a major role in shaping the direction of Japan's foreign policy.